



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Richard J. Bruckner
Director

February 9, 2012

TO: Curt Pedersen, Chair
David W. Louie, Vice Chair
Esther L. Valdez, Commissioner
Harold V. Helsley, Commissioner
Pat Modugno, Commissioner

FROM: Mitch Glaser, AICP, Supervising Regional Planner
Community Studies North Section

SUBJECT: FEBRUARY 22, 2012 – AGNEDA ITEM # 6
PROJECT NO. R2010-00446-(5)
ADVANCE PLANNING CASE NO. 2010-00005-(5)
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. 2010-00016-(5)
AMENDMENT TO TITLE 22 (ZONING ORDINANCE) TO UPDATE THE
AGUA DULCE COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT

BACKGROUND

Section 22.44.090 of the Los Angeles County Zoning Ordinance (Zoning Ordinance) provides for the establishment of Community Standards Districts (CSDs) “to provide a means of implementing special development standards contained in adopted neighborhood, community, area, specific and local coastal plans within the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, or to provide a means of addressing special problems which are unique to certain geographic areas within the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.” As your Commission is aware, the Board of Supervisors (Board) has established CSDs for numerous unincorporated areas, and they have proven to be an effective tool for enhancing the environment and quality of life in unique and diverse communities throughout the County. The Board established the Agua Dulce CSD on July 30, 1985.

For over five years, staff from the Community Studies North Section has been working closely with the Agua Dulce Town Council (Town Council) and the Town Council’s CSD Revision Committee (Committee) to create an ordinance to amend the Zoning Ordinance to update the Agua Dulce CSD. The proposed CSD update contains development standards that aim to maintain the secluded, rural nature of the community and to also address the unique concerns and desires of property owners, residents, and other stakeholders in the area.

Staff recommends adoption of the proposed Agua Dulce CSD update in order to address the desire of the community to preserve its low-density, rural character and to protect the unique scenery and significant natural resources of the area.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In 2007, the Committee approached staff with an initial draft of the CSD update. Since that time, staff has held several meetings with the Committee, the Town Council, and community stakeholders with the aim of reaching an agreement on issues related to the CSD update.

On March 11, 2010, staff conducted a community outreach meeting to present its draft of the CSD update. All property owners within the boundary of the proposed CSD were invited to the meeting. At the meeting, community stakeholders voted to have staff make revisions to the draft and conduct an additional meeting to present a revised draft.

On May 25, 2011, staff conducted a second community outreach meeting to present a revised draft of the CSD update. All property owners within the boundary of the proposed CSD were invited to the meeting. At the meeting, staff conducted a poll regarding each topic covered by the draft CSD update at that time. The polling results are attached (Attachment 5). Staff further revised the draft CSD update based on these results and attended a Town Council meeting on October 12, 2011 to present the revised draft and solicit feedback. Additional revisions were made after the Town Council meeting.

Prior to the Regional Planning Commission hearing, the draft CSD update, Initial Study, and Negative Declaration were made available to the community for viewing at the Acton/Agua Dulce Library and on the Department of Regional Planning website.

COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT

The Zoning Ordinance does not address many of the land use issues that exist in the community of Agua Dulce. In order to address these issues, the draft CSD update (Attachment 1) establishes new development standards and design guidelines intended to ensure that future public and private improvements are consistent with the community's existing development pattern as well as the goals, objectives, and policies of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan. The draft CSD update addresses the following items: minimum lot size, residential and commercial development standards, street improvements, public trails, lighting, signage, the allowance of cargo shipping containers, expansion of allowable home-based occupations, an increase in the allowable number of dogs, and significant ridgeline and hillside management area protection.

The Zoning Ordinance provides for the use of CSDs for small geographic areas to address unique land use issues. General Plan policies encourage guidelines governing scale and design on a community-by-community basis. Establishing a CSD update is therefore consistent with the policies of the Countywide General Plan.

ISSUES

There are several sections of the CSD in which staff's recommendation differs from that of the Town Council. These sections include the number of dogs allowed per parcel, the number of cargo shipping containers allowed per parcel, the allowance of

commercial vehicle parking in residential and agricultural zones, the inclusion of drainage standards in the CSD, and a CSD boundary expansion.

The Zoning Ordinance currently allows a maximum of three dogs to be owned as personal pets in residential and agricultural zones. The Town Council proposed that, on lots that are one net acre or greater in size, two additional dogs be allowed for each additional net acre of lot size, with a maximum allowance of seven dogs. Staff acknowledges that it may be appropriate to increase the maximum number of dogs allowed in a rural community such as Agua Dulce. However, an increase from three dogs to seven dogs would be significant, could set a precedent for other unincorporated communities, and could be considered excessive in light of concerns related to noise and public safety. Therefore, staff is recommending an allowance of five dogs on lots that are one net acre or greater in size.

The Zoning Ordinance does not currently allow cargo shipping containers (containers) in residential and agricultural zones. The Town Council proposed that containers be allowed in these zones, with the number of allowable containers increasing as the net lot size increased, and with a maximum allowance of ten containers. Staff acknowledges that it may be appropriate to allow containers in a rural community such as Agua Dulce, as containers provide a durable and relatively inexpensive location for the storage of agricultural equipment and household items. However, an increase from zero containers to as many as ten containers would be significant, could set a precedent for other unincorporated communities, and could be considered excessive in light of concerns related to aesthetics and visual impacts. Therefore, staff is recommending an allowance of one container on lots that are one net acre or greater in size and two containers on lots that are five net acres or greater in size. In addition, staff is recommending the allowance of additional containers through the Minor Conditional Use Permit process, which provides for notification to nearby property owners.

The Zoning Ordinance does not currently allow commercial vehicle parking in residential and agricultural zones. The Town Council proposed that, on lots that are five net acres or greater in size, parking for one commercial vehicle (such as a truck tractor-semitrailer) be allowed. Staff believes that such an allowance would be significant, could set a precedent for other unincorporated communities, and raises concerns related to noise, aesthetics and visual impacts, roadway safety, and roadway maintenance. In addition, staff observed that this portion of the CSD update was the most controversial among community stakeholders; for example, the results of the poll taken at the May 25, 2011 community meeting showed that 42 percent of those polled opposed this allowance while 43 percent of those polled approved this allowance. Therefore, staff is not recommending allowance of commercial vehicle parking in residential and agricultural zones.

The Town Council originally proposed that specific drainage standards be included in the CSD update. However, staff concluded that the proposed drainage standards, as set forth in an earlier draft of the CSD update, would be redundant with the Low Impact Development (LID) Standards currently contained in the Zoning Ordinance. Staff prepared a matrix comparing the drainage standards proposed by the Town Council and the LID standards contained in the Zoning Ordinance (Attachment 6). As

evidenced in this matrix, both standards achieve similar results. Therefore, staff is not recommending that the Town Council's proposed drainage standards be included in the CSD update so as to avoid overlapping provisions and redundancies in the Zoning Ordinance.

The proposed CSD update expands the current boundaries of the Agua Dulce CSD (Attachment 2). The Town Council proposed that the boundaries be further expanded to include a particular grouping of properties that are currently located within the Acton CSD boundaries, as previous polling indicates that these property owners wish to be placed in the Agua Dulce CSD boundaries. Staff has attempted to facilitate discussions between the Town Council and the Acton Town Council regarding this issue. However, the Acton Town Council has opposed any changes to the Acton CSD boundaries. Therefore, staff is not recommending that the boundaries of the proposed CSD update include this area, as there is a lack of consensus between the Town Councils. Please see attached documentation for further information (Attachment 7).

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

Staff prepared an Initial Study for this project in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the environmental reporting procedures of the County of Los Angeles. The Initial Study showed that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment. Based on the Initial Study, a Negative Declaration for this project has been prepared.

The environmental documents (Attachment 4) were made available to responsible agencies and the public for the required 30-day review period. Staff received comments from the Native American Heritage Commission.

RECOMMENDED MOTIONS

I move that the Regional Planning Commission close the public hearing and approve the Negative Declaration.

I move that the Regional Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution and forward the proposed updated Agua Dulce CSD to the Board of Supervisors for consideration in a public hearing.

Please find attached the CSD ordinance, environmental documentation, and resolution. Should you have any questions, please contact Brianna Menke at (213) 974-6476 or bmenke@planning.laocounty.gov.

MG:bm

Attachments:

1. Recommended CSD Ordinance for Commission Adoption
2. Proposed Boundary Expansion Map
3. Resolution for Commission Adoption
4. Initial Study and Negative Declaration
5. Results from May 25, 2011 Community Meeting
6. Drainage Standards Comparison Matrix
7. Boundary Dispute Documentation
8. Additional Correspondence